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ABSTRACT

Existing theories of value debating (resolutions dealing with values rather than policy) may be more effectively applied and developed when viewed as stock issues paradigms for debating values in competitive situations. Issues are vital to an advocate's cause because they are essential to the meaning of a proposition and can also provide an organization structure for a debate. However, debate judges often experience difficulty reaching objective and fair decisions when values become the focus of a debate. A solution to this problem may be found in the "stock issues approach." Values can be defined as acts or customs regarded in a particular and favorable way (e.g. privacy or free speech). Three stock issues for debating values that can be applied in the judging process are value criterion, value justification, and value objection. Value criterion consists of defining terms that imply value dimensions. Value justification is a designative issue that determines whether the affirmative side warrants the value criterion established in the debate. The value objection stock issue considers whether the value justification is a proper or improper warrant for the resolution on balance, estimating whether counter, alternative, or conflicting values outweigh the value justification offered by the affirmative (e.g., free speech vs. public safety). This stock issues approach offers three independent issues of analysis important to most value discussions. (NKA)

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A STOCK ISSUES APPROACH TO VALUE DEBATE

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A STOCK ISSUES APPROACH TO VALUE DEBATE

In recent years, debating value propositions has gained increasing popularity. As well it should, Zarefsky (1980) explains, "After all, people participate in many sorts of argumentative encounters other than public policy decision making--judicial argument, scientific and historical arguments, aesthetic and critical arguments, philosophical and theological arguments, and others" (p. 389). The literature has provided some insight of the general nature of debating values, however, the emergence of the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA), Off-Topic debate and Lincoln-Douglas debate at the high school level has created a need for additional theory concerning the application of value theory to competitive situations (Brownlee, 1982; Kane, 1975; and Wenzel & Hample, 1975). This shortcoming would appear most prevalent regarding to decision-making paradigms. Pierce (1986) observes, "Currently value debating seems to lack a clear judging criteria and certainly a consistently applied judging criteria" (p. 11). Judges are often in the position of deciding the outcome of a debate contest without standards to determine who did the best job of debating. Unlike it's policy counterpart, a "stock issues approach" has yet to emerge in competitive value debates. While some debaters present criteria, operational definitions, and/or decision-rules, many times these amount to little more than conceptual definitions from popular dictionaries and shallow analyses of why or how they should win the debate. This essay suggests that existing theories of value debating may be more effectively applied and developed when viewed as stock issues paradigm for debating values in competitive situations.

What are issues? Matlon (1978) writes, "First, issues are vital to an advocate's cause. They are crucial or essential to the meaning of that proposition (Mills, 1968) and the proposition, in fact, cannot be resolved until its issues are discovered, formulated, studied, and advocated (Windes and Hastings, 1965). Second, issues provide an organization structure for a debate. They are 'central points of organization upon which the controversy resolves' (LaGave, 1971). Third, issues determine areas of clash or possible clash in a debate. These points of tension are the 'basic questions upon which the two sides differ'" (Thompson, 1971). One problem for some debate judges is which and how issues should be weighed in order to reach an objective and fair decision when values become the focus of a debate. The solution to this problem may be found in a "stock issues approach."

What are the "stock issues" in a debate over values? What criteria can judges apply during the decision making process when none are presented during a debate? Stock issues are the location of potential dispute. Stock issues become actual when they emerge by opposition. What makes an issue a stock issue is its recurrent emergence as an actual issue. This essay contends that three stock issues for debating values can be applied in the decision making process in many value debates. Specially, the stock issues of Value Criterion (VC), Value Justification (VJ), and Value Objection (VO) can be used by judges to resolve value debates. Although the VC and the VJ are similar to Matlon's (1978) definitive and designative terms, the present terminology attempts to enhance and clarify the application of these concepts in competitive situations.

THE VALUE CRITERION

In resolving a debate over values the judge must first know what the value is and how the value is defined. The stock issue of VC consists of defining terms in the resolution that imply value dimensions. Warnick (1981) says, "Value propositions can be distinguished from other kinds (such as fact and policy) because of their primary focus is to make a qualitative judgment in regard to the object of evaluation" (p. 110). The VC provides the definitive issue of the debate. Ehninger and Brockreide (1963) explain, "Value terms must be defined or arguments become de gustibus non est disputandum (about matters of taste there is no disputing). . . Defining value terms, then, transfers the ground from vague emotional abstractions to explicit designative questions that can be answered by reference to substantive and authoritative proofs" (p. 222). Thus, if judges are to objectively evaluate the debate, the value terms should be identified, defined, and used as part of the decision making criterion to weigh affirmative and negative values.

Values are simply acts or customs regarded in a particular and favorable way by a people (e.g. privacy, free speech, due process, equal rights, etc...). The values in a resolution need to be defined early in a value debate so that other issues may be fully considered. In addition to defining the values, the affirmative should define value terms--that is terms which suggest valuation of the constructs purposed by the resolution. A review of past CEDA topics, for example, demonstrates value terms that frequently appear in resolutions. The examples include: improved, sacrificed, failed, hinders, promotes, desirable, important, harms, detrimental, overemphasized, justified,

better, beneficial, good, and disadvantageous. Although, these examples are clearly not an exhaustive list, they are representative of the value terms presented to judges in competitive debates. Value terms are not synonymous with values per say, however, they are useful for locating the focus of the dispute and establishing affirmative and negative ground. Patterson and Zarefsky (1983) explain, "When people judge a situation, objects, or person, they make claims of value. By value we mean, broadly speaking, a notion of what has positive or negative worth. A claim of value indicates to what degree the object measures up to a standard. The standards can be either absolute or relative" (p. 18). By asking what the value terms of a resolution are and how they are best defined, judges may more objectively evaluate other issues after the debate round.

On the surface, it may appear the term Value Criterion is being substituted for what policy debaters refer to as topicality. However, the VC and topicality are fundamentally different concepts. Topicality is defined by a plan or by operation. Topicality is often considered an issue of an agent's jurisdiction and is determined by advancing a proposal or example which falls within the parameters of the broader resolution. Topicality is considered by many to be an absolute voting issue. To the contrary, the VC focuses on the values and the value terms of the resolution. The VC determines the value standard or definition the judge will use to resolve affirmative and negative justifications. Winning the VC should not be considered an independent voting issue in and of itself, thus the use of the term topicality in place of the VC could contribute to confusion in debating and rendering decisions in value debates.

The decision rule for the issue of VC might work this way. The affirmative has the burden of proof to present and defend a VC that warrants an affirmative decision. If the affirmative VC is proven to be best then the affirmative has met its burden on this issue and the affirmative VC will be used to resolve the dispute. If the negative offers a counter VC and the judge determines it to be superior then the negative VC is used to resolve the dispute. The "better definition" standard would appear to be more appropriate to value debates than a "reasonable" definition standard. Ulrich (1984) points out, "When philosophers debate over what is the nature of 'good' or 'justice' or other terms, they do not accept the first 'reasonable' definition: they seek to discover the best possible definition. In a similar manner, we should attempt to discover the best definition of the terms in the resolution before we support that resolution" (p. 471). To use the term topicality and have to explain "value topicality" is different then "policy topicality" confuses the issue. The term VC more accurately describes what the definitive issue's function in a value debate is really attempting to address--what the value is, how the value should be defined, standards to weigh the values, and affirmative and negative ground. Once the judge determines which team best supports the VC of the resolution, the groundwork for subsequent issues are established.

VALUE JUSTIFICATION

The second stock issue of value debate which judges should consider when resolving value debates is the Value Justification (VJ). This concerns the degree of value violation. The VJ is a designative issue which determines whether the affirmative warrants the VC

established in the debate. A VJ issue does not limit the use of other paradigms, hierarchies, or rhetorical devices that can be used as to establish standards to weigh the resolution. McBurney and Mills (1951) write, "Decisions on propositions of value will always be made on the basis of the values held by those who are to judge. If you do not like these standards, then your only alternative is to convert the judges to standards that you think are sound. Actually, much of the deliberation on propositions of value is concerned with these standards of judgments" (p. 48). Since it is the affirmative's burden to support the resolution they should have an obligation to convince the judge that the resolution should be adopted, thus win a VJ.

There are a multitude of standards from which to choose from. Debaters might justify the resolution by applying authoritative proof which warrants the credibility of their claims. In doing so, debaters could argue the expertness, competence, trustworthiness, and validity of their sources (evidence) support the resolution. Debaters could justify the resolution by applying the rhetorical tools of induction, deduction, syllogism, and analogy. Debaters could justify the resolution, for example, by applying Toulmin's Proof line (1958) and arguing the resolution is warranted according to this argumentation theory or Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs as levels of priorities to weigh the VJ. Most importantly, a stock issues approach should not restrict the debaters options, but facilitate enough structure to guide them through the important aspects of a debate over values while providing a meaningful standard for decision making. If the affirmative advocates a value then the use of a VJ should be the second burden of the affirmative. This point may appear obvious to many, but often

in competitive debate situations, affirmative teams refuse to defend the value implicit in the resolution and the debate becomes extremely difficult to evaluate.

The decision rule for the VJ stock issue might work like this. The affirmative has the burden to present and defend a VJ. If the negative proves the affirmative provided insufficient VJ or failed to meet the VC in the round they should win the debate. Freely (1986) agrees:

> In a debate on a proposition of value, the affirmative maintains that certain belief, value, or fact is justified that conforms to the definition or criteria appropriate to evaluate the matter at issue. The proposition of value does not provide for a plan; rather the affirmative seeks our support for a claim that (1) endorses a value. . . (2) chooses one value over another. . . (3) rejects a value" (p. 43).

If the affirmative seeks adoption of a value resolution, it is clear that some burden of justification should be placed upon them. The VJ can serve as the second stock issue of value advocacy.

VALUE OBJECTION

The third stock issue of value debating is the Value Objection. This issue is often argued by debaters although little is written about its standards or application. The VO considers if the VJ is a proper or improper warrant for the resolution on balance. The VO considers whether counter, alternative, or conflicting values outweigh the VJ offered by the affirmative (e.g. free speech vs. public safety; right to life vs. women's rights; or the will of the majority vs. the rights of the minority). Smith and Hunsaker (1972) point out, "values may conflict with each other; in wartime, the human life and the value of self-defense sometimes conflict with a value derived from a different drive: hunger conflicts with the value of a pleasant physical

appearance. . ." (p. 23) The VO presents an important consideration when weighing values; especially those that compete. Ulrich (1984) argues:

> When one supports a value topic one means that the topic, on balance, is true. . . To view resolutions differently would lead to absurd conclusions. Hitler could be said to be a good man since he was kind to a few friends. We could condemn the justice system because of one error. This is not how judgments are made about values in real life; instead value judgments are made by looking at the entirety of value implications. The same should be the case in CEDA" (p. 473).

By adopting the VO as the third stock issue of value debating the on balance comparison that Ulrich speaks of can be considered and the resolution can be the true focus of the debate.

Even though the VO should be regarded as a stock issue it is generally initiated by the negative team who then assumes the burden of proof for its support. Unfortunately, debaters often argue counter-warrants or policy implications and label them VOs. This practice makes objective evaluation more difficult. The VO attempts to prove that counter, alternative, or conflicting values competes with and outweighs the VJ. The implication is that the resolution must be upheld on balance, not simply an affirmation that some truth exist which warrants any level of support.

The decision rule for the VO is not always simple. In weighing the VO(s), the judge should first consider if the VO(s) and the VJ are mutually exclusive--can the two coexists? If the negative demonstrates the VO is mutually exclusive of and competes for existence with the VJ then the judge determines which teams position best supports the VC established for the round. In this instance, if the VO(s) outweigh the VJ the negative team should win. When the VO and VJ are mutually

exclusive the decision becomes a choice between the two. However, if the VO and the VJ are not mutually exclusive, but still conflict, the judge should consider the degree, probability, and magnitude of the VO(s) and VJ established by the debaters. While this situation is by no means always a simple process, the VC and VJ should have provided standards that the judge can use to compare the competing values. Once the VC is determined and the VJ are established, the judge should have an easier task of weighing the VO compared to debates where these stock issues are not applied.

CONCLUSIONS

This essay has presented three stock issues of value debating--the Value Criterion, the Value Justification, and the Value Objection. The application of these issues can be helpful to guide judges through the decision making process of value debates. Although, these three stock issues are by no means exhaustive and additional issues may be added to the list, they do represent a specific, simple, and usable approach which guides judges and debaters through the important considerations of a value debate. In addition, it is suggested that debate coaches can use these three issues to help provide structure for their debaters research and affirmative case construction. While these stock issues should not be considered essential to every value debate and alternative approaches may be more appropriate on certain topics, the approach offers three independent issues of analysis important to most value discussions. The Value Criterion, Value Justification, and Value Objection may provide a helpful perspective to judges who may be having difficulty in attempting to determine a winner of a debate. Pierce (1986) concludes, "Debate like any other competitive activity must have

fair and consistent criteria for determining who is to win and who is to lose. If decisions are based on inconsistent and arbitrary criteria then debate loses credibility" (p. 1).

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